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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: APPLICANT FOR DIRECTOR OF UN OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT
REF: STATE 117720

1. (SBU) Reftel requests post's assessment of UNESCO Comptroller Getachew Engida who is among the applicants for director of the UN Office of Internal Oversight. Post deals with Engida occasionally on matters regarding payment of our assessed contributions and has seen him in action when speaking for the Secretariat on financial matters before the Executive Board's Finance and Administration Commission and the General Conference's Administration Commission.

2. (SBU) Our experience of Engida has been positive. He is a native of Ethiopia who lived many years in the United Kingdom where he says he became a chartered accountant. While we are still attempting to obtain his resume, we know that he has told us that he has held several finance positions both in the private sector and among other international organizations. In our dealings with him, Engida has always been pleasant, responsive, and open. He has been willing to admit to shortcomings and straightforward in explaining disagreements within the UNESCO Secretariat when these occur.

3. (SBU) Engida has also handled himself well in meetings of UNESCO's governing bodies. He was able to keep his cool while responding to sometimes sharp questions from member states. In doing so, his explanations were frank and largely jargon free. (Note: He did a particularly good job in explaining the workings and implications of the application of International Public Sector Accounting Standards - IPSAS -- to member states. End note.)

4. (SBU) This Mission, however, is not well-placed to answer all of the questions in reftel. From our perch outside of the UNESCO Secretariat, we have not seen how Engida behaves when required to deliver bad news to superiors. We have also not seen him in a situation where he had to speak forthrightly in the face of strong criticism from one or more member states. We must, therefore, rate his political skills as largely unknown.

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